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SONG OF THE LONG MARCH

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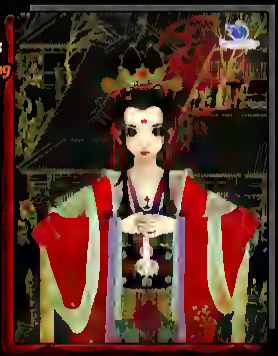

Song of the Long March 55

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< CHAPTER 55 >

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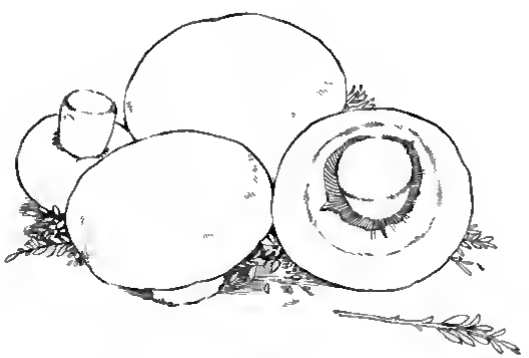

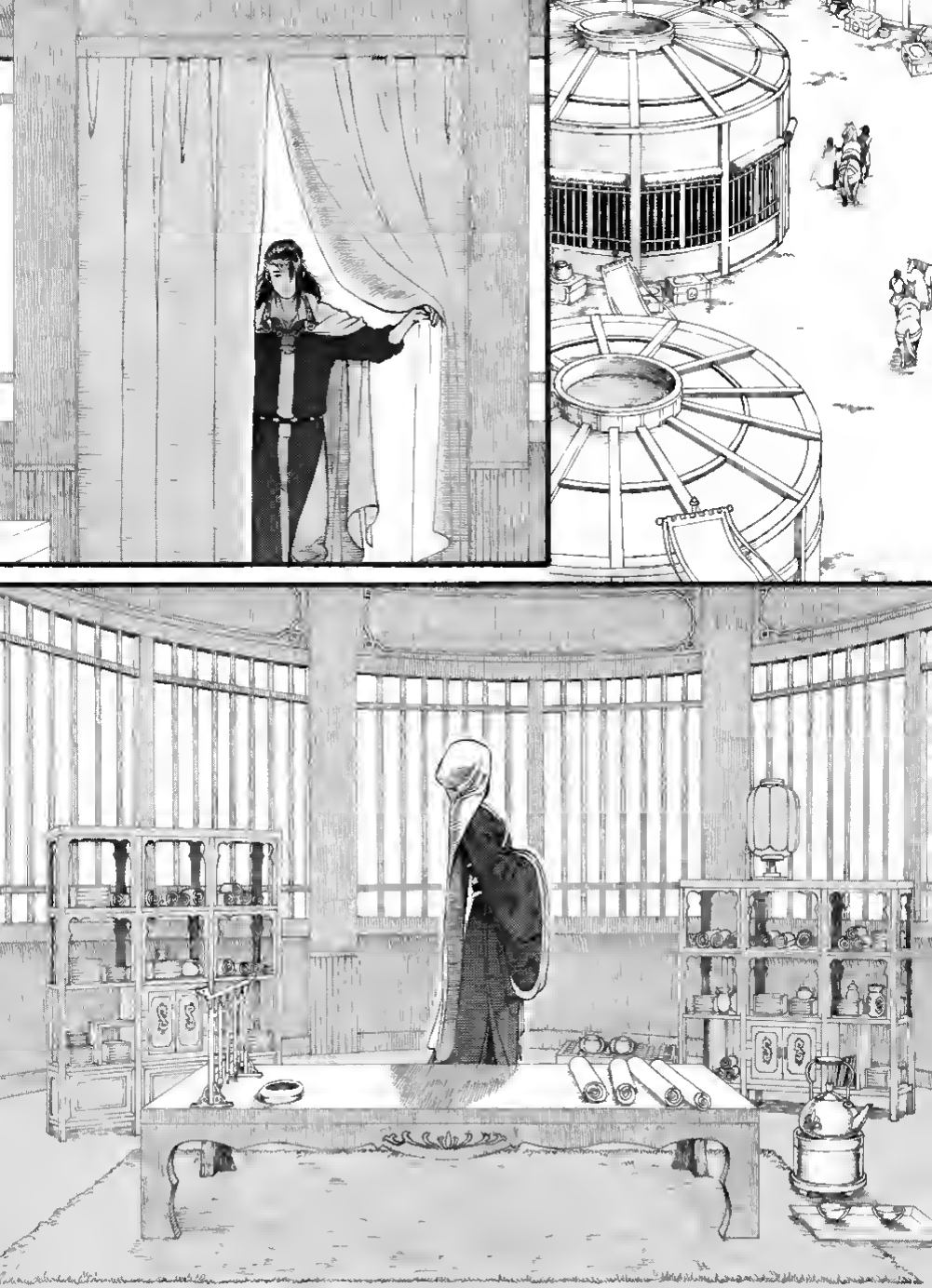

.....
THE KHAN HAS SET OFF?
YES.
EVERYTHING IS READY.
A WORD FROM ME AND IT WILL ALL BE SET IN MOTION.

WE CAN SEIZE THE MAIN CAMP AT OUR LEISURE.
WHEN THE GREAT KHAN HAS EXHAUSTED HIS FORCES AGAINST UYGHUR AND XUEYANTUO AND HAS YET TO RETURN..
HAVING THE RIGHT TIMING IS CRUCIAL. YOU CANNOT BE RASH.
AND ASSIST THE KHATUN AND THE KING OF SUI IN RESURRECTING THE SUI EMPIRE.
AFTER I BECOME THE NEW KHAN,
OF COURSE.
I SHALL LEAD MY ARMY SOUTH.
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF PLANNING, I DON'T MIND WAITING JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
THE KING OF SUI IS THE GRANDSON OF EMPEROR YANG, SUN ZHENGDAO AFTER THE FALL OF SUI, HE AND HIS MOTHER, THE EMPRESS OF SUI, WERE WELCOMED BY PRINCESS YICHENG INTO EASTERN TURK.
STYLING HIMSELF AS THE KING OF SUI, HE HOLDS A COURT WITH A HUNDRED OFFICIALS IN DINGXIANG AND RULES OVER TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SUBJECTS IN THE WAYS OF SUI.

THANK YOU
!
I'M FINE.
JUST OVERJOYED.

.I HAVE HEARD YOU SPEAK OF WILLOWS LEANING AGAINST EACH OTHER IN SPRING,
FIREFLIES ILLUMINATING THE SUMMER NIGHT,
CRIMSON LEAVES DRIFTING DOWN THE STREAM IN AUTUMN, AND DOWNY SNOW ENSHROUDING THE GLAZED LANTERNS IN WINTER.
.....
THE VASTNESS AND OPULENCE OF THE CENTRAL PLAINS. . EVERYTHING I KNOW OF THEM, I LEARNED FROM YOU.
NOW THAT THEY ARE ALMOST IN SIGHT,
WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
.....

SHE'ER,
IT HAS BEEN ALMOST TEN YEARS SINCE THE PRINCESS ORDERED ME TO TEACH YOU THE LORES AND CUSTOMS OF THE HAN.
WE MAY NOT BE TEACHER AND STUDENT IN NAME,
BUT WE DO SHARE SUCH A BOND
SHE'ER,
STARTING FROM TODAY, LADY JINSE WILL TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR STUDIES IN VARIOUS ARTS.

SINCE SHE WAS YOUNG SHE HAS BEEN ABLE TO MEMORIZE ANYTHING WITH JUST A GLANCE AND IS THOUGHTFUL AND QUICK-WITTED
SHE WAS ALREADY RENOWNED FOR BEING "FAIR AS ZHENMI, CLEVER AS WENJI" BEFORE SHE EVEN CAME OF AGE.
DO NOT TREAT HER AS AN ORDINARY MAIDSERVANT
T/N: ZHENMI AND CAI WENJI WERE WOMEN RENOWNED FOR THEIR BEAUTY AND INTELLECT RESPECTIVELY IN THE LATE EASTERN HAN DYNASTY
YES
.....
...DO YOU REMEMBER THE ENVOY WHO WAS SENT TO DELIVER A MILITARY ORDER FOR THE KHAN?

BUT RECENTLY, SOMEONE HAS HEARD HIM MENTION AFTER SOME WINE,
THAT HE SEEMED TO HAVE SEEN THE ENVOY WHO WENT TO COLLECT TRIBUTE FROM THE KHITAN AT ASHINA SUN'S...
INDEED.
THE ONE WITH A ONE-TRACK MIND WHO IS UNFAILINGLY LOYAL TO THE GREAT KHAN?
A HUMBLE GIFT FROM ME TO THE FUTURE KHAN
CONSIDER THIS...

HEH!
HEE HEE HEE!
PRINCESS TUJIA IS INCREDIBLE!
SHE REALLY FOUND IT!

LILI!
LILI!
I FOUND IT!
YOU FOUND IT ALL BY YOURSELF?
AREN'T I GREAT? I'M GREAT, RIGHT?
TUJIA,
YI'NAN IRKIN'S ARMY HAS ALREADY ARRIVED,
AND IS ENCAMPED TWENTY MILES TO THE SOUTH

I'M ACCOMPANYING THE ELTEBER TO MEET THEM.
WANT TO COME ALONG?
NO WAY!
I HATE SEEING FATHER DRESSED AND ARMED FOR BATTLE!
ARE THEY GOING TO START FIGHTING?
IS PRINCESS TUJIA LEAVING?
THIS TIME WE'LL DEFINITELY WIN AGAIN, RIGHT?
MY MOTHER SAID PRINCESS TUJIA AND HER TRIBE WOULD ALSO BE LIVING HERE FROM NOW ON?
WOW, THAT MUST BE A HUGE TON OF PEOPLE!
IS IT TRUE WE DON'T HAVE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE TURKS ANYMORE?

IN THE FUTURE, WE'LL ALL BE ABLE TO LIVE HERE IN PEACE.
YES, WE'LL WIN THIS TIME TOO
I SAID TO COME DRESSED IN SPLENDID ATTIRE!
DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND? SPLENDID ATTIRE!

I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO AMASS SOLDIERS, NOT WELCOME GUESTS?
CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT LAUGHABLE VANITY OF YOURS AT TIMES LIKE THIS, UNCLE?
YOU NEVER HAD THE BEST LOOKS IN THE FIRST PLACE,
BUT AT LEAST PEOPLE COULD TELL YOU WERE A GIRL.
ARE YOU DONE YET?
FORGET IT. IT WON'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE FOR SOME-ONE LIKE YOU ANYWAY
JIELI IS PERSONALLY LEADING AN ARMY OF SEVENTY THOUSAND THIS TIME.
UNCLE, YOU HAVE TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND MEN YI'NAN IRKIN HAS THIRTY THOUSAND, AND THE REST OF THE SMALL TRIBES BARELY ADD UP TO TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND
HOW ARE YOU SO CERTAIN OF VICTORY?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YOUR UNCLE CAN TRASH TWENTY THOUSAND TURKS EVEN WITH ONLY FIVE THOUSAND ELITE SOLDIERS.
OH...
UNCLE IS INDEED BRIMMING WITH CONFIDENCE. I BELIEVE THE OTHER SIDE MUST ALSO BE FEELING THE SAME WAY?
I HEAR THE KHAN LIKES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS.
OH?
I'VE HEARD THE SAME THING

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS...
BECAUSE THE KHAN IS PROFIT-SEEKING HE HAS PLACED DEEP TRUST IN BARBARIAN MERCHANTS. MANY TRIBE LEADERS HAVE LONG BEEN DISCONTENT WITH THIS.
THOSE SECRETLY DISLOYAL TO THE KHAN ARE MANY. NOT TO MENTION, THERE'S THE LESSER KHAN EYEING HIS THRONE.
THERE ARE NOT MANY BLADES FOR HIM TO WIELD, AND YOU ARE THE SHARPEST.
DON'T OVERTHINK IT.
.....
...WHY DOES IT FEEL SO STRANGE...
FOR ME TO BE PERSUADING YOU NOT TO THINK SO MUCH?

WAIT I'LL COME WITH YOU.
I'LL GO TOAST FATHER
YOU'VE DRUNK ALOT YOURSELF.
JUST TOAST HIM IN THERE AND DON'T DRINK ANY MORE
WHAT?
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
THAT FATTY WHO WENT TO COLLECT TRIBUTE FROM KHITAN...

HAS GONE INTO FATHER'S YURT.
I'M IMPRESSED.

USING YOURSELF AS BAIT TO LURE JIELI KHAN?
YOU TRUST ME THAT MUCH?
OF COURSE NOT
MY NIECE'S UNCLE WILL BE STAYING HERE TO OVERSEE THE TROOPS IN MY PLACE
EH?
LEAVING SUCH AN IMPORTANT TASK..TO THIS OLD MAN...?
ENOUGH ALREADY.
IT'S TRUE THAT YOU HAVE TO BE HERE TO HELP ME SMOOTH THING OUT AMONG THE SMALL TRIBES

SURE
SURE
KEEP A GOOD EYE ON THEM.
YOU DO HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS. NORMALLY THEY'D BE TRIPPING OVER THEMSELVES TRYING TO KILL EACH OTHER THE MOMENT THEIR EYES MEET, BUT YOU'VE MANAGED TO GET THEM TO COOPERATE...
IS THERE STILL REASON IN THE WORLD?
THE MERCHANTS I'VE PAINSTAKINGLY CULTIVATED ARE NOW TREATING YOU LIKE THEIR KIN.
HAVE SOME SHAME, WILL YOU?
LILI
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LEAVE!
HMM?

BUT...
NO BUTS...
WE'VE COME UP WITH OUR BATTLE STRATEGY. WE'VE FINISHED PORING OVER WHAT INTELLIGENCE WE HAVE. YOU CAN GO NOW
THE HAN HAVE A SAYING, "WHEN THE BIRDS HAVE FLOWN AWAY, IT'S TIME TO STORE THE BOW."*
WE HAVN'T EVEN STARTED SHOOTING YET, AND YOU'RE PUTTING AWAY YOUR BOW ALREADY?
WHAT KIND OF BOW ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE OR DO YOU WANT TO WATCH YOUR GRANDMOTHER SKIN ME ALIVE?
IF YOU WANT STORIES OF WHAT'S HAPPENING, I'LL SET ASIDE A MESSENGER TO RELAY INFORMATION TO YOU ONCE A DAY
*T/N: WHEN SOMEONE IS NO LONGER OF USE, IT'S TIME TO GET RID OF THEM.
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